

## Scottish Independence Debate Gets Serious



*A white paper on the question of Scottish independence is due out tomorrow, 26 November. University of Glasgow Professor and Visiting Professor at the LSE **Philip Schlesinger** warns that the future of Scottish broadcasting will be one of the important issues raised.*

The Scottish Government will be publishing its hefty White Paper on Independence on 26 November. It will contain some key thinking about the future of broadcasting and communications if Scotland decides to secede from the United Kingdom in the referendum planned for 18

September 2014.

Scotland's Culture Secretary, Fiona Hyslop **set out some of the SNP government's thinking** once again when speaking at the Salford Media Festival on 20 November. She reiterated that the Scottish Government would establish a new public service broadcaster 'based on the staff and assets of BBC Scotland' and that this would be publicly-funded. She believes that this move would give a boost to Scottish producers and, tellingly, talked of a 'Scottish and international industry based in Scotland', clearly seeing this development as both inward and outward looking.

Secretary Hyslop sought to reassure Scottish viewers and listeners that their favourite UK programmes would still be available and to underline to broadcasters that existing licences issued to Channels 3 and 5 would be 'honoured through to 2025'.

Change in Scotland and no change across the border, then? These are views well known to aficionados and not, presumably, the full stall. The feasibility of these propositions requires much small print to be produced and needs to pass the test of analysis of its potential practical implementation. No small expectations of the White Paper, then.

Once the White Paper is out, we can expect much more focus on the independence debate generally, and sounds of increased consternation from London are already in the air. The issues it raises – not least the future of the currency, defence, immigration, welfare, and cross-border relations – are fundamental for the future of the British Isles. Without doubt, the future of broadcasting will also be much debated, with other communications issues not too far behind.

Once I've had time to digest the White Paper, I'll write again on this topic, noting how the emerging debate is playing out north and south of the border.

*The article gives the views of the author, and does not represent the position of the LSE Media Policy Project blog, nor of the London School of Economics.*

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